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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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SEPTEMBER 1974 NO. 123

ALL FIRED UP

About Stoves And Fireplaces. Storms, power failures, fuel emergencies, nostalgia, whatever the reason -- you have decided to install a coal- or wood-burning stove for the winter. The rewards you reap in heat efficiency and safety with this kind of heating arrangement will depend on how you go about arranging it. First, there are the basic supplies, such as a stove pipe with its various parts -- including a thimble, a collar, and an elbow. Then, there are the basic steps to be followed for the best and safest heating results. A handy aid for installing a stove is a little leaflet prepared by the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of New Hampshire and distributed to local Extension Service offices throughout the country. "How to Set Up A Coal or Wood Stove" lists the necessary equipment and gives step-by-step guidelines for installing a stove in a fireplace or for installing a free-standing stove or fireplace. Simple illustrations show proper positions for the stove and stove pipe, including a makeshift heating system for an extreme emergency. Single free copies of the four-page leaflet are available from your local Cooperative Extension office.

About Firewood. Choosing firewood to burn in your fireplace or wood stove is much like selecting a favorite wine or cheese: Each wood species can offer something different. USDA's Forest Service has developed a leaflet, "Firewood In Your Fireplace," which can help you to become a firewood connoisseur. It gives tips on where to get firewood -- such sources as sawmills, some National Forests, private forests, even dumps and landfills. One section on buying firewood defines common firewood terms and measurements -- standard cord, face cord, air-dry, hardwoods and softwoods. The burning, aromatic and heat production characteristics of various kinds of woods are described and rated on a handy comparison chart. Once you have your firewood, the leaflet tells you how to build better and safer fires. Copies of "Firewood For Your Fireplace" (L-559) are 25 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

One thing shoppers will not find this fall is a food shortage. Tight supplies of some crop foods will result in higher prices, but not empty shelves. And such foods as rice, dry beans, potatoes and onions, very tight last year, are produced outside drought areas and are in good supply this fall.

Farmers brought millions of acres back into production this year to satisfy demands of both American and foreign consumers and to rebuild depleted stocks. Almost from the start, however, natural forces thwarted these plans. This spring, rain turned the country's midsection into an unworkable quagmire. Summer brought drought that shrivelled crops and pastures. And this fall, many fields will be late in maturing, making possible further losses to frost, which in some cases has already hit.

Feed grain and soybean crops have sustained most of the damage. Resultant higher prices of feed plus dry ranges have forced livestock farmers to trim their herds and flocks. Our chief food grain crops, wheat and rice, have set new records despite bad weather.

Instead of the usual story of fall food abundance and general easing of food prices, fall 1974 will feature an odd mixture: ample supplies of red meats contrasting with tighter supplies of poultry, dairy products, and some foods that come from crops.

On average, food prices will be rising further this fall, after a sharp rise for the summer months. Here is how U.S. Department of Agriculture economists envision the fall shopping situation.

There will be more beef on the meat counter this fall than there has been in several years. Prices will be down from both this summer and last year. Less of this beef than usual will be the grain-fattened variety that contributes most of the Choice steaks and roasts. So shoppers may find more of the younger, leaner beef.

Financial conditions have also prompted ranchers to send more calves to slaughter. That means that more veal and 'baby beef' will be present at the meat counter.

The pork picture is the same. Many farmers are sending their hogs to market this fall and selling the feed grain they grow. But more pork now will lead to less early next year.

Farther down the counter, poultry products have another story to tell. After expanding their output early in 1974, chicken, turkey, and egg farmers, have now been forced by higher feed costs to curtail production. That's one reason why prices of these products started rising after midyear. Prices could rise more but large accumulations of frozen turkey and the large supplies of red meat should keep poultry prices below the high levels of last fall.

Dairy products will take a seasonal upswing in price this fall. Consumers have been drinking less milk. This, in turn, poured more milk into cheese and butter making. Now big stocks of these dairy products are on hand, which may limit fall price hikes.

After a sharp upswing in demand last year, big supplies of frozen fish were stockpiled. Now, with more meat to eat and fish prices higher, consumers are eating less fish. Compared with last year, more frozen shrimp, less canned salmon are available.

Down the grocery aisles where staples are sold, some good things are happening. A top bean crop, for example, is spelling lower prices for dry beans and dry peas. The Nation's rice crop, mostly harvested before hurricane Carmen struck the Gulf Coast, is the biggest ever. So look for cheaper rice as well. Then, too, there is a larger world coffee crop that has lowered green coffee prices, but it may be another 3 to 6 months before retail prices decline. A large pack of tomato paste may help hold tomato product prices steady.

Yet, market forces are working the other way for many groceries. Flour, bread, pastas, and other cereal and bakery products will be priced steady to higher than summer. Corn, source of cooking oil, flakes, meal, as well as corn sweeteners, is higher priced. Likewise, soybeans, with a profound effect on cooking oils, mayonnaise, and margarine. In fact, with margarine rising in price and butter easing a little this year, prices of the two have been approaching or overlapping.

There is no good news to report yet on retail sugar prices. Imported sugar prices remain high and our domestic crop may turn out smaller than initially expected because of the hurricane damage. Even so, on a worldwide basis, more sugar is being produced than will be used for the next 12 months. This may spell some easing in the price of sugar we import, and may slow the increase in retail sugar prices at the supermarket.

Shopping for vegetables will be a very mixed experience. Potatoes and onions: less expensive -- the result of good crops. Other fresh vegetable prices are likely to remain firm for the rest of the year. Supplies will depend on the outcome of crops in Florida, California, and Mexico.

Each fall, orchards and bogs yield their bounty of noncitrus fruits and nuts. In the East there is a bigger apple crop, but fewer will be picked in the West. More grapes are being harvested for table use and wine, but less for raisins. Pickings have been slimmer for this year's Bartlett pears, prunes, and plums, but more generous for tart cherries, peaches, and nectarines. Cranberries will be abundant with 6 percent more berries for harvest than last fall. Nut harvests won't be larger, however, with reports of fewer pecans, filberts, walnuts.

Fall also marks the beginning of a new citrus season. As the holidays approach, oranges, grapefruit, and lemons will arrive from Florida and the West Coast.

In their processed forms, fruits and vegetables are notably higher in price. Price rises will continue this fall as processors pass to consumers the higher costs of sugar, tin cans, fuel, transportation and other items. Growers of these products have been asking more, too, to cover inflation in their farming expenses. Relatively speaking, supplies of frozen fruits and vegetables are larger than those of canned items.

NEW RECIPE BOOK

Soybeans In Family Meals. Soybeans are a valuable and economical source of good nutrition. Because they contribute good quality protein, soybeans are frequently used in products designed as meat substitutes or combined with meat as an extender. But soybeans have many more possibilities than that. They are a dependable source of a number of minerals and vitamins including calcium, phosphorus, iron, vitamin A, thiamin and riboflavin. And they come in so many forms: There are fresh and canned green soybeans; dry soybeans; soybean sprouts; soy flour; soy grits; soy milk; soybean mash; soybean curd; soybean oil -- not to mention soy sauce. They can be used in a variety of dishes for any meal of the day. A new USDA book, "Soybeans In Family Meals," gives recipes for main dishes, salads, soups, vegetables, breads, sauces and desserts using soybeans and soybeans products. Many of the recipes give easy variations and all include the calories per serving. In addition, the booklet discusses the nutritive value of soybeans in their many forms, how to prepare some of the soy products and how to store them. Copies of "Soybeans In Family Meals" (G-208) are availabe for 35¢ each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

YOU MAY COOK ALONE

But You Have A Lot Of Help. That was a wonderful dinner you cooked last night. You, in turn, can thank the more than 12 million people who helped to prepare it. Happily, they did not clutter up the kitchen, either. They are the people on America's food assembly line -- the retailers, wholesalers, shippers, processors, and farmers who produce and market the 1,500 pounds of food each of us eat every year. You can meet these people in "The $150 Billion Food Assembly Line," the recently revised visual presentation from USDA. This informative and entertaining 58-frame color presentation is available either as a slide set or filmstrip. The slide set can be purchased for $17 from the Photography Division, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. The filmstrip sells for $9.50 from Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011.. The prices include soundtrack cassettes and copies of an illustrated narrative guide.

FOOD THE WORLD OVER

Production Marches On And Up. During the past twenty years, world food production has marched upward with general consistency. In 18 of those years, world food production advanced; in 15, world food production per capita advanced. Altogether, world production in the two decades increased by more than half and per capita production by 22 percent. The most serious setback was in 1972 with its unlikely combination of unfavorable factors -- from poor growing weather in several major agricultural countries to fishing failures off the coast of Peru. In 1973 the upward trend resumed with production well above 1972. The 1974 crops seem likely to be very close to the record level of 1973 despite the effects of drought in the U.S.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of SERVICE, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone 202-447-5437.